

LACDMH VOLUNTEERS HONORED WITH COUNTY AWARD

By Steve Hendrickson, L.C.S.W., MH Clinical Program Head



The Dorothy Chandler Pavilion is usually the County work station for Plácido Domingo and the Los Angeles Opera, but on Monday, April 8, 2014, the Chandler spotlight was on the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) volunteers Alejandra Jordan and Maricela Arroyo.

Jordan and Arroyo joined 72 other County volunteers from Animal Control through Weights and Measures at the Los Angeles County 32nd Annual Volunteers of the Year Awards. Telemundo's "Al Rojo Vivo" correspondent Jessica Carrillo was the host. LACDMH Human Resources' Shelli Weekes set the tone with a nuanced and heartfelt performance of the National Anthem. Second District Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas provided data of how many volunteers participate, and the number of county residents served. Third District Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, in his final Volunteers Awards, spoke of how volunteers meet needs that budgets cannot always fill, while enriching their own lives as well as those they assist.

Both Arroyo and Jordan agreed with Yaroslavsky's comments. Arroyo holds a full-time job as a school special education assistant, but has spent her free time taking various classes for skills she can use as a volunteer. Shortly after joining Roybal Family Mental Health Center as a volunteer, she used her connections with domestic violence agencies to place a client who had received death threats. She has used her background in special education to educate parents on their rights to additional

services. “More than that, she brings a sense of warmth and professionalism that helps parents feel understood,” said Roybal Medical Caseworker II Oscar Alvarez.

Jordan has been a volunteer with the LACDMH/LAPD SMART/CAMP programs. Her nominators praised her for demonstrating a deep understanding of crisis situations, long-term risk management, and the unique nature of the partnership with the LAPD. “She did anything she could to contribute, from filing, to field visits, to translating,” said Program Head Charles Lennon, L.C.S.W. “We’re not sure what we will do without her.”

Jordan attended with boyfriend David Preciado as well as her parents Francis Jordan (a newly retired police officer) and Teresa Rangel who works with the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST). Jordan is starting a master’s degree program in psychology at Cal State Fullerton, with hopes of returning to LACDMH as a professional.

Arroyo attended with Oscar Alvarez and Karla Martinez, who also came to Roybal Family Mental Health Center (RFMHC) as a volunteer. Martinez was recently hired as a RFMHC medical case worker.

Also attending were Gabriela Caudillo, LACDMH’s previous volunteer coordinator, and Sylvia Mora, the present LACDMH volunteer coordinator. Both have received praise from managers and supervisors for the fast and efficient manner in which they process and certify new volunteers.

